

The old adage that we achieve clinical but not microbiological cure of syphilis with antibiotics is probably true.

It is likely that most people in developed countries nowadays who have untreated syphilis have received treponemoidal antibiotics for other intercurrent infections, so that any neurosyphilis that developed would either be modified<sup>5</sup> with few physical signs or would be completely treated and clinically cured. However, others disagree with this.<sup>6</sup>

But, to answer Dr Reed's question, we haven't seen anyone treated since the second world war who has developed neurosyphilis in subsequent years.

DAVID GOLDMEIER

- 1 Reed TAG. Tertiary syphilis. *Sex Transm Inf* 1999;75:75.
- 2 McElligott GLM, Jefferiss FJG, Willcox RR. The treatment of early syphilis with penicillin, neoarsphenamine and bismuth. *Br J Vener Dis* 1948;24:45-9.
- 3 Hay PE, Clarke JR, Taylor-Robinson D, et al. Detection of treponemal DNA in the CSF of patients with syphilis and HIV infection using the polymerase chain reaction. *Genitourin Med* 1990;66:428-32.
- 4 Rolfs RT, Joesoef MR, Hendershot EF, et al. A randomised trial of enhanced therapy for early syphilis in patients with and without human immunodeficiency virus infection. *N Engl J Med* 1997;337:307-14.
- 5 Hooshmand H, Escobar MR, Kopf SW. Neurosyphilis—a study of 241 patients. *JAMA* 1972;219:726-9.
- 6 Luxon L, Lees AJ, Greenwood RJ. Neurosyphilis today. *Lancet* 1979;1:90-3.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Infectious Diseases.** By Donald Armstrong and Jonathan Cohen. Pp 2000; £250 (two volumes). London: Mosby, 1999. ISBN 0723 423288.

The most striking first impression of these two volumes is the lavish production with marvellous illustrations, photographs, and tables. It has many excellent features. The text is well set out and easy on the eye. The experience of the authors in approaching various diseases and clinical syndromes comes through strongly. The sections comprehensively cover infectious disease from basic science to clinical management. The clinical microbiology section is an important anchor and could be a short textbook in itself. I very much enjoyed the numerous practice points, which are oriented towards clinicians faced with funding solutions to problems. These consist of short essays with tables or illustrations and tackle particular clinical problems such as "the diagnosis of HIV in newborns," "what is the treatment of a positive toxoplasma titre in pregnancy?" or are in a debating style—for example, "how long should osteomyelitis be treated?"

Each section is colour coded and although the American numbering system takes a few minutes to get used to one can easily navigate around the book. The contributors are all internationally famous in their fields and, with so many of them, I am quite impressed by how up to date the book is. They must have been chased hard to get their contribution in on time. One of the few criticism

would be that there could have been more on hepatitis C and its interaction with HIV.

However, if you can't find what you want in this book, there is a comprehensive list of websites, which are of interest to infectious disease and other physicians. There is a free CD ROM which creates a direct internet link to these sites. The other important resource is a slide library, which comes on the same CD ROM. In all, 1500 tables and clinical and other photographs are stored and can be made up into personalised presentations; these can then be used as a teaching resource via computer generated images. The high quality of these images will impress anyone involved in producing material for teaching. However, it is a shame some of the useful tables have not made it from the text to the CD ROM.

Although this book is expensive, I would recommend it to anyone interested in infectious diseases especially those who have to teach at any level, undergraduate or post-graduate.

With the rise of the internet the big textbook might soon be heading for extinction. Thankfully this book delays the time when I will be downloading information from the super highway rather than turning over the pages of a well produced book. If I need to use my computer there is always that free CD ROM.....

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**Review of ABC of Sexual Health.** Ed John Tomlinson. Pp 60; £14.95. London: BMJ Books, 1999. ISBN 0-7279-1373-5.

I was delighted when the editor sent me this book and asked me to review it. I had looked forward with anticipation to the original series that were published in the *BMJ*. I had thought then that each article was just superb and now they are all neatly packed together in this ABC, I am of the opinion that this is an excellent book which achieves its aim completely. On the cover, it says "it is an ideal reference for doctors, nurses, students and all those not involved in the area of sexual health," and Professor Adler adds in the foreword that this book will put the profession in touch with the real world, real people, with real problems, and fill a large gap in our knowledge.

John Tomlinson, the editor, has pulled together an excellent group of experts who have practical experience in the field and have managed to condense that experience into a series of short articles, all of which make informative, yet entertaining reading. In my opinion, no specific background is required to gain information from these articles and I have recommended specific sections of this book for individual patients who need to read about their problem.

Those of us who work in sexual medicine were amused that the *BMJ* had to carry a warning about the sexually explicit material inside and, indeed, John Tomlinson refers to this in the preface and admits that a very small number of readers were offended. However, given the general reticence in society about sexual matters, this is not surprising.

Sexual health is an essential part of having a happy and fulfilling life, and everyone who works in a caring profession should be

comfortable when the conversation drifts into areas of sexuality. Patients, who often broach the topic with trepidation, need to be assured of a sensitive hearing. In my opinion, this excellent book will give anyone in the caring profession a good grounding in sexual matters, so that they can explore these areas with patients when appropriate, without embarrassment and have some idea of likely strategies of management.

COLM O'MAHONY

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## NOTICES

### International Herpes Alliance and International Herpes Management Forum

The International Herpes Alliance has introduced a website ([www.herpesalliance.org](http://www.herpesalliance.org)) from which can be downloaded patient information leaflets. Its sister organisation the International Herpes Management Forum (website: [www.IHMF.org](http://www.IHMF.org)) has launched new guidelines on the management of herpesvirus infections in pregnancy at the 9th International Congress on Infectious Disease (ICID) in Buenos Aires.

### Pan-American Health Organization, regional office of the World Health Organization

A catalogue of publications is available online ([www.paho.org](http://www.paho.org)). The monthly journal of PAHO, the Pan American Journal of Public Health, is also available (subscriptions: [pubsvc@tsp.sheridan.com](mailto:pubsvc@tsp.sheridan.com)).

### Imperial College School of Medicine, Division of Paediatrics, Obstetrics, and Gynaecology, Advanced Course for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 19-23 June 2000

Further details: Symposium Office, Imperial College School of Medicine, Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital, Goldhawk Road, London W6 0XG (tel: 020 8383 3904; fax: 020 8383 8555; email: [sympreg@ic.ac.uk](mailto:sympreg@ic.ac.uk)).

### Australasian Sexual Health Conference, Ven Troppo, Carlton Hotel, Darwin, Northern Territory, 21-24 June 2000

Further details: Shirley Corley, Conference manager, Dart Associates, PO Box 781, Lane Cove, 2066 NSW, Australia (tel: 02 9418 9396/97; fax: 02 09418 9398; email: [dartconv@mpx.com.au](mailto:dartconv@mpx.com.au)).

### Imperial College School of Medicine, Division of Paediatrics, Obstetrics, and Gynaecology, Caring for Sexuality in Health and Illness (for healthcare professionals and nurses), jointly with Association of Psychosexual Nursing 27 June 2000

Further details: Symposium Office, Imperial College School of Medicine, Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital, Goldhawk Road, London W6 0XG (tel: 020 8383 3904; fax: 020 8383 8555; email: [sympreg@ic.ac.uk](mailto:sympreg@ic.ac.uk)).